

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST L.D. 101**

**LD TITLE: An Act To Allow a Junior Hunter To Take One  
Antlerless Deer without an Antlerless Deer Permit (HP0083)**

**SPONSORED BY: Representative GILBERT of Jay**

**CO-SPONSORED BY: Senator HASKELL of Cumberland, Senator  
PATRICK of Oxford, Senator SAVIELLO of Franklin, Representative  
CRAFTS of Lisbon, Representative BLACK of Wilton, Representative  
LAJOIE of Lewiston, Representative STANLEY of Medway,  
Representative SHAW of Standish, Representative BRIGGS of Mexico**

**DATE OF HEARING: February 12, 2013**

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Jim Connolly, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking in neither for nor against to L.D. 101.

This bill allows a person who holds a junior license to take one antlerless deer without a permit.

The intent behind the proposal before you is most admirable and one that the Department has been examining for the past several years. It is obviously important for youth to have opportunities in Maine in order to continue Maine's strong hunting tradition. However, we have several concerns. First and foremost, is the impact it will have on the Department's efforts to closely control deer harvest levels. As you know, the Department has invested a great deal over the last twenty years or so, in restoring deer populations to more desirable levels. Maine is a big state, with greatly differing conditions. In many areas where hunting was the primary factor affecting deer populations, the current antlerless deer permit management system has worked very well, and today deer population levels over most of the southern half of the state are flourishing. Habitat, weather, and other factors are keeping deer numbers at lower than desired levels in many northern, western and eastern sections of the State. Close control of the harvest in each Wildlife Management District (WMD) is as important today as it was when we embarked on our antlerless deer management system many years ago. The

provisions of this bill would impact efforts that limit the harvest of antlerless deer in areas with less than desired deer population levels. It would also impact the Department's ability to effectively respond to population declines brought about by a series of bad winters in the southern portion of the state. The Department would need to account for the additional harvest that might result under the provisions of this bill. In some cases there could still be a harvest of antlerless deer that exceeds the level established by the deer management system. Automated records for deer registration are not currently available for law enforcement in the field.

The increase in the deer population that has occurred as a result of the antlerless deer permit system is contributing to the rebuilding of the deer herd. We feel that educating our youth about the benefits of these changes and supporting our management efforts is important and will help ensure a healthy white-tailed deer population when they pass hunting traditions on to their children. Under current statutes, when the deer population has recovered to the point that antlerless permits are issued in a WMD, youth hunting for antlerless deer is assured. The Department would encourage the Committee to allow that to occur.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.